



Openness in Research (RPH 2.6)

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**Stanford
University**

**Research Policy
Handbook**

**Document
2.6**

Title: **Openness in Research**

Originally Issued: April 24, 1969 **Current version:** May 16, 1996

Classification: STANFORD UNIVERSITY POLICY

Summary:

Expresses Stanford's commitment to openness in research; defines and prohibits secrecy, including limitations on publishability of results; specifies certain circumstances which are acceptable under this policy.

Formerly titled "Secrecy in Research," the name of this policy was changed by the Senate of the Academic Council on October 12, 2000.

Related Research Policy Handbook Documents:

- 1.5 [Confidentiality of Administrative Panel Proceedings](#)
- 2.1 [Principles Concerning Research](#)
- 2.2 [Rights and Responsibilities in the Conduct of Research](#)

See also the following Stanford resources:

[Openness in Research Checklist](#)
[Export Controls: Information and Resources](#)

Authority:

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/DoR/rph/2-6.html>

9/9/2006

Senate of the Academic Council, reviewed annually by the Committee on Research

Contact Person:

Vice Provost and Dean of Research and Graduate Policy

RESOLVED:

1. That the principle of openness in research - the principle of freedom of access by all interested persons to the underlying data, to the processes, and to the final results of research - is one of overriding importance. Accordingly, it is the decision of the Senate that that principle be implemented to the fullest extent practicable, and that no program of research that requires secrecy (as hereafter defined) be conducted at Stanford University, subject to the exceptions set forth in Paragraph 4 of this Resolution.
2. That a research program shall be regarded as requiring secrecy
 - a. if any part of the sponsoring or granting documents that establish the project is not freely publishable, or
 - b. if there is a reasonable basis for expectation that any documents to be generated in the course of the research project will be subjected by an outside sponsor to restrictions on publication for a period in excess of that reasonably required (i.e., more than 90 days) for the sponsor to ascertain whether information he or she is entitled to have treated as confidential would be disclosed by publication, or
 - c. if access will be required in the course of the project to confidential data so centrally related to the research that a member of the research group who was not privy to the confidential data would be unable to participate fully in all of the intellectually significant portions of the project.
3. That the rules adopted by the Academic Council on September 29, 1967, are hereby amended and, as amended, are reaffirmed:
 - a. No research on a thesis or dissertation should be undertaken if, at the time the topic is set, there is any substantial possibility that it will lead to a secret thesis or dissertation.
 - b. No secret thesis or dissertation should be accepted as the basis for a degree unless, in the judgment of the Committee on Graduate Studies, the imposition of secrecy could not reasonably have been foreseen until the work was so far advanced that modification of the thesis topic would have resulted in substantial inequity to the student.

- c. Scholarly activities not accessible for scrutiny by the entire Advisory Board should not be considered in connection with appointments, reappointments or promotions.**
- d. The University should enter no contract and accept no grant to carry out research if the grant or contract restrains the freedom of the University to disclose:**
 - (1) the existence of the contract or grant or**
 - (2) the general nature of the inquiry to be conducted or**
 - (3) the identity of the outside contracting or granting entity, or**
 - (4) the research results;**

provided that clause (3) shall not apply either (a) to anonymous gifts or grants that do not call for the performance of specified lines of inquiry, or (b) to research grants or contracts from individuals or non-governmental entities who request anonymity out of a justifiable motivation to protect individual privacy.

- 4. That a program of research, appropriate to the University on other grounds, shall not be regarded as unacceptable by reason of secrecy merely because one or more of the following circumstances exists:**
 - a. In a program of research involving the examination, through interview techniques or otherwise, of a living human being reasonable provision may be made to protect the rights of that individual to privacy.**
 - b. In a program of research, the purposes of which would be significantly advanced by access to information generated elsewhere which had been subjected to security classification, provision may be made for security clearance and for access to that information on the part of one or several of the participating investigators provided that the classified information is peripheral to the research program in the following sense: the relationship between the classified data and the overall research endeavor must be sufficiently remote so that:
 - 1. a member of the research group who did not hold a security clearance would nevertheless be able to participate fully in all of the intellectually significant portions of the project; and**
 - 2. there is no substantial basis for an expectation that any part of the final results of the research, or any but a trivial part of the research processes, will be subject to restriction on publication more enduring than those described in Paragraph 2.****
 - c. In a program of research sponsored by an outside entity, provision may be made for a short delay in the publication of research results, (the period of delay normally not**

to exceed 90 days), for patenting purposes or for sponsor review of and comment on manuscripts, providing that no basis exists at the beginning of the project to expect that the sponsor would attempt either to suppress publication or to impose substantive changes in the manuscripts.

When it is in the best interests of the research, the Vice Provost and Dean of Research may approve contractual arrangements that could lead to publication delays in excess of 90 days. An example is a multi-site study for which a publication committee receives data from participating sites and make decisions about joint publications. Requests for the Dean to approve such contractual arrangements should include:

1. the rationale for the request
2. a description of who will have authority over publication decisions, and
3. a statement of the provisions that will allow the investigator to publish within a defined period of time, regardless of other considerations.

Under no circumstances should a faculty member engage a student in a project governed by an extended publication delay agreement or contractual arrangement that could present a barrier to the timely submission of the student's thesis or dissertation.

- d. If, in a program of research, an outside person or entity has made available to the investigator confidential information, provision may be made to preserve confidentiality and/or a short delay in the publication of research results during which time the information source may examine the proposed publication in order to assure that the investigator has not disclosed, intentionally or unintentionally, any portion of the confidential information supplied, provided that any such provision for delay must contain assurance from the information source that he will conduct his review as expeditiously as possible, that he will not attempt to thwart publication for any reason except to protect confidential information previously supplied, and that he will indicate with specificity a sentence or sentences which he contends constitute such a disclosure.
 - e. If, in a program of research, private papers, documents, diaries or analogous materials have been provided to the investigator, provision may be made to preserve the confidentiality of those materials for the purpose of protecting the individual privacy of the author, or of the addressee, or of the immediate family of either the author or the addressee.
5. This policy shall be reviewed at least annually by the Committee on Research in one of its meetings. This meeting and others primarily devoted to considering a revision of research policy shall be announced publicly through the University calendar and other suitable means.

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Provider: Office of the Vice Provost and Dean of Research and Graduate Policy, Stanford University
Contact: Assistant Dean of Research
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